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UNCLAS COLOMBO 001380

SIPDIS

DS FOR DS/IP/SA, DS/IP/ITA, DS/ICI/PII

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: PEACEFUL PROTEST AT AMERICAN EMBASSY COLOMBO, SRI LANKA

1. (SBU) At 1210 hours a group of approximately 100 members of the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) held a protest in front of the American Embassy Colombo. The protesters were requesting the United States assistance in stopping the recent attacks by the LTTE against members of the EPDP. Three members of the delegation were allowed to enter the compound under escort of the LGF and ARSO to deliver a petition to the Embassy's Political Officer. After delivering the petition the three individuals left the Embassy, and the crowd dispersed five minutes later at approximately 1230 hours. The crowd was peaceful, and the three EPDP members allowed to enter the compound willingly followed all security protocols.

2. (SBU) The group was protesting the death of EPDP Media Secretary Balandarajah Aiyer, who was killed by two gunmen on

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August 16, 2004 in Wellawatte, Sri Lanka. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam are suspected of conducting the assassination. The EPDP is a Tamil political organization that is opposed to the LTTE. The protest began at the Indian High Commission and the moved to the British High Commission before arriving at the American Embassy. (All three facilities are located on Galle Road in Colombo.) On July 7, 2004, an LTTE female suicide bomber attempted to assassinate the leader of the EPDP Douglas Devananda. The attempt failed when police officers took the bomber into custody at the final security checkpoint before entering Devananda's office. The bomber was taken to a local police station across the street from the Embassy, where she detonated her device killing herself and four police officers. A similar march was held at the Norwegian Embassy last month after an EPDP member was assassinated by the LTTE in the Eastern Province city of Batticaloa.

3. (SBU) The Regional Security Office Colombo learned that a protest would be held in front of the Embassy thirty minutes before the event. The Local Guard Force and Surveillance Detection teams were briefed. The Regional Security Officer briefed the Marine Security Guard Detachment Commander, and Marines were placed on stand-by at the MSG BEQ. The Sri Lanka Police also deployed additional police officers at the Embassy. During the protest the Embassy personnel were instructed to remain on the compound, and both gates were closed.

4. (SBU) RSO Comments: Over the last two months the LTTE has conducted two assassinations and one suicide bomber attack in Colombo. The recent violence can be attributed to the EPDP's open support of breakaway LTTE leader Karuna, and the LTTE desire to crush any political or military rivals in the Tamil minority community. Today's protest had no anti-American sentiments.

ENTWISTLE